



Preschool Development Grant DRAFT Birth to Five Statewide Strategic Plan for 2021-23

INTRODUCTION

The Preschool Development Grant Birth to 5 (PDG B-5) is a one-year federal grant administered by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in collaboration with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and additional partners. The PDG is Wisconsin's opportunity to "connect the dots" across the early care and education (ECE) field. By forging new relationships or expanding existing ones to develop coordinated strategies, we will be able to address many needs and challenges currently faced by Wisconsin children and families.

The grant focuses on the following activities:

- Sharing best practices
- Maximizing parental choice and knowledge
- Developing a comprehensive Needs Assessment
- Creating a Birth to 5 Statewide Strategic Plan

PDG consulted a wide body of research and a range of stakeholders through the Needs Assessment process (the third grant activity above), which was used to create the Strategic Plan. This document represents the culmination of the fourth activity above. The Needs Assessment data is all available online at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/pgd/sandbox>.

The four major Needs Assessment findings outlined in the *Preschool Development Grant Statewide Needs Assessment Summary* are

- ❖ Wisconsin families struggle to ACCESS early care and education, particularly in child care deserts, predominantly located in rural areas. Access to care for infants, toddlers, during non-standard hours, and for children with special needs is a void impacting families across the state.
- ❖ Wisconsin families struggle to AFFORD early care and education. This is especially true for single-parent families and families of color. Families who qualify for child care financial subsidies often experience additional barriers to accessing them and are unable to take advantage of supports. The cost of providing quality care far exceeds families' ability to pay.
- ❖ QUALITY early care and education exists in Wisconsin, but families may not be able to access or afford it. Families and communities also have varying definitions of quality. Early care and education professionals and stakeholders expressed a need to systemically address equity, inclusion, trauma, mental health, social emotional learning, family engagement and other best practices to support quality early care and education programs.
- ❖ The Wisconsin early care and education WORKFORCE is lacking professional respect, adequate pay, benefits and diversity. ECE programs are unable to retain their best workers. Members of the workforce seek opportunities to meaningfully connect with one another, receive coaching/mentorship, peer-to-peer support and to engage in professional learning.

The Strategic Plan seeks to directly address these findings. In its initial draft phases, DCF and DPI staff involved in grant management, as well as regional and statewide leadership reviewed the Strategic Plan in September 2020. In October 2020, this draft was released for public input. The purpose of this draft release is to gather feedback from the field of early care and education in Wisconsin as well as adjacent fields and all other interested individuals, including parents and families. After all, the Preschool Development Grant vision is for all and will require hard work from many.

The Wisconsin Preschool Development Grant Vision



All Wisconsin families will have access to high-quality, affordable, local early care and education opportunities

2023

For this vision to become reality, state, regional, local and tribal agency staff, in addition to community leaders, educators, parents, and families from across Wisconsin must take part in reviewing and offering ideas to improve the plan. All feedback is deeply valued and will be carefully considered.

By early November 2020, feedback on the Strategic Plan will be incorporated, its content will be finalized, and it will be approved by DCF and DPI leadership. Finally, the Wisconsin Preschool Development Grant Statewide Strategic Plan will be published online at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/pdg>.

ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

The PDG Statewide Strategic Plan places a strong and unwavering emphasis on equity and inclusion as a central requirement for accomplishing its overall vision. All other goals and objectives will be pursued in service of our values of equity and inclusion.

Wisconsin’s Commitment to its Values of Equity and Inclusion:

- All Wisconsin children will be safe and loved members of thriving families and communities.
- All Wisconsin early care and education professionals will engage in equitable, inclusive, and culturally and linguistically responsive practices.
- Wisconsin early care and education will actively work to undo systemic discriminatory practices that negatively impact children and families based on their identities (including race, ethnicity, and gender) or abilities.
- Collaboration and advocacy at the state, regional, local, and tribal levels will help to overcome all barriers to equity and inclusion.

To live these values and act on this commitment, we are focused on reducing racial and ethnic disparities and improving outcomes of DCF and DPI’s programs and services. Further, we aim to address the needs of all vulnerable and underserved children in the work of the Preschool Development Grant. For purposes of the PDG, vulnerable and underserved children include:

- children experiencing poverty
- children of color, including children from the 11 federally recognized sovereign tribal nations within Wisconsin’s borders
- multilingual children
- children with disabilities or experiencing developmental delays
- children in foster care (including kinship care)
- children receiving in-home safety services and supports
- children experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity
- children whose parents are accessing workforce programs
- children experiencing food insecurity
- children from migrant, immigrant, and refugee families
- children from military families
- children with an incarcerated or formerly incarcerated parent
- children who have experienced abuse or neglect

It is important to keep in mind that different population groups have different needs and priorities. All stakeholder groups across Wisconsin at the state, regional, local, and tribal levels are invited to align their work with this Strategic Plan by choosing to focus on the particular goals or objectives that their members identify as the most relevant and/or pressing for them. In late fall 2020, PDG will announce its Innovation Grant competition, inviting individuals and organizations to apply for funding to pursue projects aligned to this plan, and we hope to offer additional funding in the PDG implementation phase (2021-23). Together, through all of our contributions, we will make meaningful progress toward achieving our vision for Wisconsin’s children and families.

The Preschool Development Grant Framework

The Preschool Development Grant uses **Access, Affordability, Quality and Workforce** in pursuit of Equity and Inclusion as a framework for evaluating and transforming Early Care and Education in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Preschool Development Grant Framework

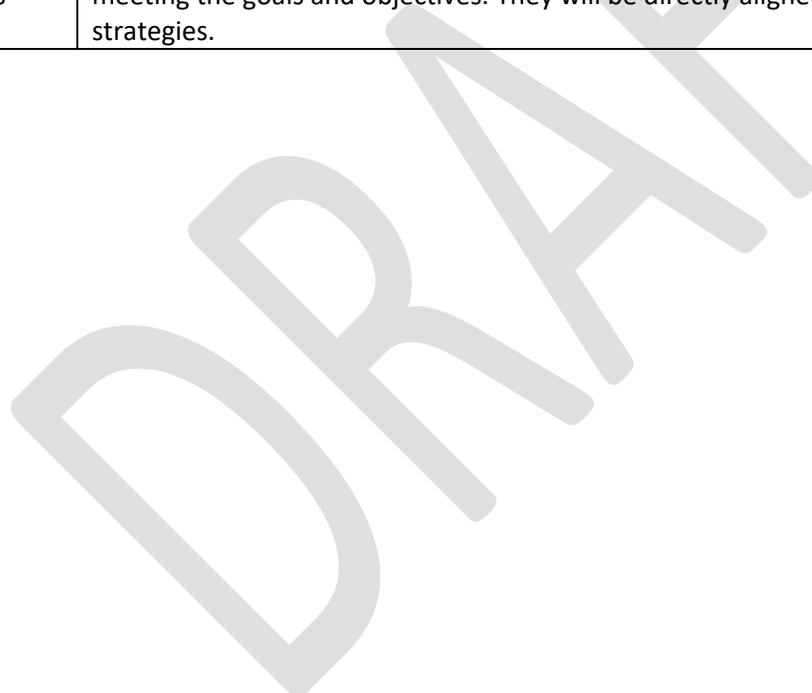


Wisconsin believes that advancement in the areas of access, affordability, quality, and workforce across early care and education will result in meaningful progress toward equity and inclusion.

DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five Statewide Strategic Plan is organized into four main sections for each strategic goal.

Section	Description
Goal	These four statements are directly aligned to the framework components described in the previous section (Access, Affordability, Quality, Workforce) and are also intended to demonstrate the overarching commitment to the values of Equity and Inclusion.
Objectives	These commitment statements offer further information on specific outcomes we will pursue to meet each goal. They may be routinely measured to determine the impact of our efforts.
Strategies	These tactics and best practices will be pursued by DCF and a range of collaborating partners listed to take concrete action steps toward accomplishing each goal and objective. The strategy statements detail who is involved and what they will do to implement the Strategic Plan. There may be many strategies tied to each objective and some strategies may appear under more than one goal statement.
Progress Measures ¹	These indicators describe the specific data we will use to evaluate our progress toward meeting the goals and objectives. They will be directly aligned to both the objectives and strategies.



¹ At the time of this public release, DCF staff and research partners at the University of Wisconsin-Madison are still working to identify the comparative data and references needed to finalize the Progress Measures related to each Goal. Therefore, this draft consists of a general statement describing the types of measures you will see in this section once the Strategic Plan is final.

STATEWIDE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND PROGRESS MEASURES

Global Strategies Addressing Multiple Goals (1-4)

The following tactics and best practices will help us to pursue several of the goals and objectives below:

- All state agencies will collaborate on the Governor’s Leadership Council on the Early Years to identify areas for collaboration, resource allocation, and advocacy within their work to support and ensure
 - All children and families’ access to local early care and education.
 - State employees’ satisfaction with working for a family-friendly employer.
 - A focus on multi-generational economic mobility to support making early care and education affordable for families.
 - Making early care and education a sustainable career that is viewed as essential state infrastructure.
- DCF will develop models and implement communication campaigns to promote local partnerships that would increase innovative partnerships and non-traditional collaboration and in turn, increase the availability and reduce the price of early care and education for families.
- DCF will develop pathways to bring friend/family/neighbor unregulated child care programs into the regulated system, supporting their transition and advancement within the YoungStar QRIS.
- State, regional, and local partners will expand opportunities and promote participation in shared services networks to reduce strain on the workforce, increase access to services that support all programs, and reduce the cost of operating early care and education programs.
- Stakeholder groups will continually conduct targeted regional/local/tribal needs assessments to gauge demand for new/enhanced services.
- State, regional, and local entities will collaboratively engage in data-informed strategic planning and decision-making related to early care and education programs.
- DCF will continue to promote family engagement practices, including increasing participation in a statewide texting program for parents to help them with their infant/toddlers development and learn how to access necessary resources and services.
- Collaborate with K-12 education systems at the state and local levels to ensure young children are well-prepared for K-12 education, based on shared philosophies, strategies, and coordinated work on priority initiatives.

GOAL 1: Wisconsin children and families will have equitable ACCESS to early care and education opportunities.

Objectives Related to ACCESS

We will...

- Offer resources including funds to support the start-up of new child care programs, expand existing programs to serve additional families, and sustain operations over time; include incentives offered to programs meeting targeted needs (i.e., for certain age groups, populations, and/or non-standard hours of service).
- Collaborate across state agencies, statewide organizations, and with business/community leaders to form creative partnerships with blended funding models to expand innovative early care and education programs through a mixed delivery system.
- Enhance a statewide system of information and referral for families and family-supporting programs that includes connections to services and programs that support optimal health, development, and care.

Strategies Related to ACCESS

The following tactics and best practices will help us to pursue the objectives above:

- DCF will develop, publish, and promote an “ECE Opportunities” list comprehensively listing needs for new or expanded ECE options by county to meet the needs of all children and families.
- DCF, DPI, and DHS will enhance awareness, functionality, and user-friendliness of systems available for use by parents and families looking for early care and education to assist them in finding a match for their needs.
- State, regional, local and tribal partners will develop and implement sustainable models to increase availability of child care for infants and toddlers (Birth to 3) and during non-standard (evening, overnight, and weekend) hours.
- DCF will facilitate a new program to engage business leader ambassadors to promote expansion of early care and education in their region.
- Child care programs will collaborate with local school districts and other community partners (e.g., Head Start, Early Head Start, school-based and community approach 4K) to ensure that birth to five early care and education slots are maintained and expanded while addressing need for wraparound services for school-age children.
- State, regional, local and tribal partners will use evaluation data from PDG/statewide pilot programs and regional/local/tribal efforts (e.g., Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, child welfare, Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners, other service navigation and support programs) to determine potential to expand access to family-supporting services across additional regions or statewide.
- Partner agencies will enhance system for state-wide infant/early childhood mental health consultation available to professionals across all infant/young child and family serving disciplines including child care, home visiting, child welfare, Early Head Start, Birth to Three early intervention, and pediatricians.
- Partner agencies will expand healthy eating and access to nutrition supports for low-income Wisconsin families and early care and education programs through Farm to ECE, SNAP-Ed, and other programs that help families make healthy choices.

Progress Measures Related to ACCESS (Coming Soon!)

By 2023...

- Progress Measure 1.1
- Progress Measure 1.2
- Progress Measure 1.3
- Etc.

In the final Strategic Plan, this section will include specific data indicators referencing the current state of Wisconsin early care and education and targets for improving those data indicators.

For Goal 1: ACCESS, progress measures will focus on the number of child care slots available by county and for infants and toddlers (birth to 3), and data regarding additional early care and education services that are needed. Finally, we will seek to establish baseline data around the number of innovative programs involving non-traditional partners supporting or funding access to early care and education and increase that number by 2023.

Progress measures will be presented with an emphasis on equity and inclusion. For example, a particular progress measure may seek to improve overall access to family resource centers by X amount statewide, while also meeting specific sub-targets seeking to improve access for rural and other named vulnerable/underserved populations by at least Y amount.

Goal 2: Early care and education will be AFFORDABLE for Wisconsin families, including vulnerable and underserved populations.

Objectives Related to AFFORDABILITY

We will...

- Increase braided funding opportunities at the state, regional, local, and tribal levels to that in turn reduce the price of care for children and families.
- Decrease the cost of operating early care and education programs without reducing quality through innovative cost sharing models and economies of scale.

Strategies Related to AFFORDABILITY

The following tactics and best practices will help us to pursue the objectives above:

- DCF will enhance focused, culturally competent communication and guidance to build awareness among families about the existence of child care subsidies; particular populations that currently underutilize Wisconsin Shares will be a focus.
- DCF will review and consider revisions to the Wisconsin Shares application, participation criteria, and processes with a focus on ensuring equitable opportunity to participate in the program.
- Explore increasing Wisconsin Shares payment amounts to reduce the gap between subsidy payments and the price of care.
- DCF and DHS will simplify the subsidy application process across various family support programs like Foodshare and BadgerCare; allowing for automatic subsidy eligibility for families receiving SNAP without additional verification; and implementing automatic eligibility determination at income maintenance offices. Also, provide guaranteed, short-term subsidy (presumptive eligibility) for when parents are waiting approval for Wisconsin Shares eligibility.
- DCF will develop and implement a Wisconsin Shares financing model that utilizes contracts for high quality care instead of reimbursements with a focus on priority populations. Target contracts based on geography/poverty density/deserts to ensure equity. Require programs receiving contracts to use an approved salary scale for teachers. Provide a differential reimbursement rate for priority populations and geographies, including infants and toddlers.
- DCF will offer a monitoring period after a family no longer qualifies for Wisconsin Shares to ensure they successfully transition off of subsidies (sustain access to quality care and access resources as needed).
- Departments and divisions across state government will explore creative resourcing solutions that benefit early care and education, and thus, multiple generations of Wisconsinites.

Progress Measures Related to AFFORDABILITY (Coming soon!)

By 2023...

- Progress Measure 2.1
- Progress Measure 2.2
- Progress Measure 2.3
- Etc.

In the final Strategic Plan, this section will include specific data indicators referencing the current state of Wisconsin early care and education and targets for improving those data indicators.

For Goal 2: AFFORDABILITY, progress measures will focus on data around family income and the price of child care, along with participation in Wisconsin Shares. Additional data will explore the impact of cost sharing measures to increase profitability margins for early care and education programs, along with other potential measures.

Progress measures will be presented with an emphasis on equity and inclusion. For example, a particular progress measure may seek to reduce the overall percentage of family income spent on early care and education, while also meeting specific sub-targets seeking to reduce this percentage more dramatically for vulnerable/underserved populations.

Goal 3: Wisconsin early care and education will be high QUALITY and responsive to all families' needs.

Objectives Related to QUALITY

We will...

- Incentivize and reduce barriers to participation in the YoungStar quality rating and improvement system (QRIS).
- Review regulation process with a goal to simplify and expedite the process for all and incentivize the transition of friend/family/neighbor unregulated child care to participate in the regulated system.
- Support movement of YoungStar-participating programs from lower to higher star level ratings in the QRIS.
- Develop alternative definitions, pathways and competencies within the YoungStar QRIS to honor the experience and desired characteristics (e.g., cultural competence) of thriving programs that have not attained high quality ratings.
- Ensure that quality ratings are clearly and effectively communicated to parents and families to support their decisions and/or address any concerns they have about programs.
- Review, enhance, and expand participation among current and future early care and education professionals in a range of professional learning opportunities through scholarships and other incentives.
- Expand existing evidence-based programs that ensure parents/guardians have the supports they need to promote optimal health and development for their children.

Strategies Related to QUALITY

The following tactics and best practices will help us to pursue the objectives above:

- DCF and DPI will collaborate with institutes of higher education to review and consider enhancing the curriculum for pre-service early care and education professionals in degree programs.
- DCF and DPI will work with partner agencies to expand professional learning (i.e., training and coaching) on standards-based early care and education, including expectations for multilingual learners, Head Start Program Performance, and other relevant sets of standards.
- State, regional, local, and tribal partners will collaborate to increase the capacity of all programming to support children with special needs and train staff on the referral process.
- Partner agencies will work with the state, regional, local, and tribal stakeholders to increase professional learning, capacity, and awareness of programming to support trauma-informed care and social and emotional learning.
- DCF, DPI, and DHS will expand a statewide system that gives people who touch the lives of infants and very young children support through high quality infant and early childhood mental health consultation to promote healthy social and emotional development.
- DCF and DPI will offer anti-bias professional learning (i.e., training and coaching) around equity and inclusion to all early care and education professionals statewide and partner with regional, local, or tribal stakeholders who wish to offer further opportunities on this topic.
- State, regional, local, and tribal partners will expand multicultural/multilingual practices to honor and support the traditions of families and communities in early care and education.

- DCF and DPI will administer grants for tribal language revitalization efforts.
- DCF and partnering state government agencies will review current training and guidance materials to ensure cultural competence and translation into all languages spoken by early care and education professionals.
- Early care and education programs will expand their awareness of and implementation of practices supporting equitable family engagement.
- DCF, DHS, and health care partners will develop trainings and a consultation system for infant and toddler teachers around health care topics.

Progress Measures Related to QUALITY (Coming Soon!)

By 2023...

- Progress Measure 3.1
- Progress Measure 3.2
- Progress Measure 3.3
- Etc.

In the final Strategic Plan, this section will include specific data indicators referencing the current state of Wisconsin early care and education and targets for improving those data indicators.

For Goal 3: QUALITY, in addition to the breakdown of YoungStar participating providers (i.e., total participation and number at each star rating level), we will explore and measure other ways that communities define quality. Early childhood suspension and expulsion rates will also be expected to decrease substantially. Finally, we will look for expansion of participation in professional learning programs and reporting of competencies in key areas, among other indicators of quality improvement in early care and education.

Progress measures will be presented with an emphasis on equity and inclusion. For example, a particular progress measure may seek to explore increases in quality ratings among providers serving children of color and/or impoverished children.

Goal 4: The Wisconsin early care and education WORKFORCE will be diverse, fairly compensated, supported, and sustained.

Objectives Related to WORKFORCE

We will...

- Develop a robust compensation strategy, for the early childhood workforce.
- Engage in proactive measures to recruit diverse new professionals to enter the field and foster their advancement into leadership roles, including people of color, males, and parents of young children.
- Engage in proactive measures to identify and retain high quality workers at risk of leaving the profession.
- Engage in strategies to increase job satisfaction and advancement opportunities among members of the early care and education workforce.

Strategies Related to WORKFORCE

The following tactics and best practices will help us to pursue the objectives above:

- DCF will offer funding (i.e., bonuses) to hire and retain staff in new or expanded programs that meet criteria and appear on the “ECE Opportunities” list (see strategy under Goal 1 for more information).

- State, regional, local, and tribal partners will offer a range of programs (including collaboration with school district and higher education institutions) to increase learning opportunities available to the early care and education workforce.
- DCF will offer funding to support signing bonuses for new teachers working in priority communities.
- DCF will support high school, college, and career guidance programs with information and materials to promote early care and education career opportunities.
- DCF and DPI will offer pathways to “emergency” or non-traditional certification of other professionals who possess valuable credentials to be able to work and contribute in early care and education while maintaining rigorous expectations.
- DCF will implement higher and more frequent wage supplements through REWARD.
- DCF will explore developing a loan forgiveness program for teachers who have completed educational degree programs and spend at least 3 years working in regulated programs; develop differential (shorter) loan forgiveness timelines for teachers working in priority geographies or with priority populations.
- DCF will increase T.E.A.C.H. funding.
- DCF will make Registry membership and renewal free and required for all regulated programs and Head Start/Early Head Start allowing for better data collection on recruitment and retention.
- DCF will continue to invest in communications campaigns to celebrate and honor the early care and education workforce.
- DCF and other state agencies will develop models and communication campaigns to promote local collaboration to increase the pay and benefits of early care and education workers.
- DCF and DPI will build a networking system to connect early care and education professionals to their peers with similar questions or interests.

Progress Measures Related to WORKFORCE (Coming Soon!)

By 2023...

- Progress Measure 4.1
- Progress Measure 4.2
- Progress Measure 4.3
- Etc.

In the final Strategic Plan, this section will include specific data indicators referencing the current state of Wisconsin early care and education and targets for improving those data indicators.

For Goal 4: WORKFORCE, progress measures will focus on indicators such as reported wages, benefits, job preparation, advancement, and satisfaction measures. In addition, it will involve analysis of demographics of the workforce, including number of staff with minimal years of experience, people of color, and males in the workforce. Finally, we will explore data on participation in shared services networks and establish baseline data on participation and satisfaction with other professional networks, among other indicators of early care and education Workforce engagement.

Progress measures will be presented with an emphasis on equity and inclusion, with particular focus on diversifying the early care and education workforce and satisfaction rates among professionals who belong to different racial/ethnic groups.